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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR OES/PCI NFITE, MGERDIN
STATE PASS OPIC FOR DERB, ZHAN, MSTUCKART, JEDWARDS
STATE PASS TDA FOR LFITTS, PMARIN
STATE PASS USAID FOR NFREEMAN, GBERTOLIN, GWEYNAND, SLAWAETZ
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS
DOC FOR 3310/USFC/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS
DOC FOR USPTO-PAUL SALMON
TREASURY FOR DFIELDS, AIERONIMO, RHALL, DPETERS
TRANSPORTATION FOR KSAMPLE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [GH](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NIGERIAN CONSERVATION FOUNDATION INVOLVES
COMMUNITIES IN CONSERVATION

11. (U) Summary: Mr. Alade Adeleke, Technical Director of Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) told Pol-Econ Associate on February 17 that the organization is seeking partnerships with U.S. universities specializing in climate change and the consequences it has on resource conservation and environmental protection. Under partnership with a New Zealand university, a Nigerian PhD student is conducting research on birds' species found on the Mambilla Plateau in Taraba State. When Regional Environmental Officer (REO) and Pol-Econ Associate met with Professor Emmanuel A. Obot, Executive Director of NCF in December 2008, he said that involving local communities is the preferred approach to resource conservation. During his December 2008 visit, REO learned that NCF has broad experience in managing national parks and has been very successful by implementing policies that empower local communities to manage and access resources, for example, policies that require timber harvesters to pay royalties to the local people. NCF is currently involved in a project which enables local communities to use Nipa palm to make buttons and necklaces for sale, improving their income. NCF also runs the Lekki Conservation Center in Lagos which protects wildlife along the Lekki axis from sprawling urban development. The center serves as an education hub for schools and visitors. NCF is actively involved in policy advocacy. It supported the creation of the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Urban Development and collaborated with the federal government to produce a National Conservation Strategy for Nigeria. End Summary.

12. (U) During a meeting with Professor Emmanuel A. Obot, Executive Director of Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) and four of his staff on December 1, 2008, Professor Obot told REO that NCF, the largest conservation non-governmental organization (NGO) in Nigeria, was founded in 1980 to protect and conserve nature. NCF has both local and international partners. Its international partners include World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Birdlife International, and the World Conservation Union. Locally, NCF partners with other environmental NGOs, government institutions, the business community, academia, students and rural-urban communities. In 2001, NCF was granted 3 million naira (approximately USD 20,000) from Nigeria's ecological fund but has not received the money to date. In 2006, NCF adopted a new strategic plan tagged "Focusing on Biodiversity NCF 2007 and Beyond". This new strategy provides a framework through which NCF seeks to implement its vision of a Nigeria where people prosper while living in harmony with nature.

NCF Involves Communities in Conservation

¶3. (U) Professor Obot said that historically, NCF has worked with government agencies such as the National Parks Service to manage protected areas (PAs) and contribute to the economic development of communities living inside or around these areas. However, there was constant conflict between the government and the local communities due to government policies which restricted or completely excluded these communities from accessing resources in the protected areas. NCF adopted a participatory sustainable management approach aimed at involving the local people in resource conservation, he said.

¶4. (U) An example of such an approach is the ongoing participatory forestry project in Donga valley and Mambilla plateau in Taraba State. This project is executed in collaboration with the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). It is part of a larger program to ensure sustainable management of the forests of Taraba State through the establishment of a greater role for communities in forest management. Obot argued that the success stories and the unique achievements of this project show benefits both for biodiversity conservation and the improvement in livelihood of forest-based people. He indicated that the Taraba State model is being adopted as much as possible in other locations in Nigeria.

¶5. (U) Obot added that that NCF has broad experience in setting up national parks and management structures like user groups to enable local communities to manage and access resources. He praised the user groups for implementing policies that benefit the local communities, for example, policies that require timber harvesters to

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seek permission from the local village committee and to pay royalties to the local people. Over 70 per cent of the proceeds from harvesting timber return to local communities, he said.

Managing Parks is Difficult

¶6. (U) The management of national parks is not without difficulty. Most forest reserves are owned by the states and the federal government provides overall management support. The federal, state and local governments have not been able to agree on the best methods to conserve resources. Obot argued that the federal government's role should be to make policies and the role of states and local governments should be to implement them. He noted the need for new foresters, but expressed disappointment in the federal government for not training young people in forestry management.

Lekki Conservation Center Unique

¶7. (U) NCF also runs the Lekki Conservation Center (LCC) in Lagos, a conservation initiative created to protect wildlife found along the Lekki axis of the Lagos metropolis in the face of sprawling urban development. The center serves as an education and resource hub for schools and visitors. In 2006, 10,420 people visited the center. The project protects the environment, prevents poaching by surrounding communities and serves as a tourist center for local and international visitors. The center is also involved in research and environmental education.

Nipa Palm Control Has Economic Impact

¶8. (U) NCF is involved in a new project called "Nipa Palm Control by Utilization" located in Oron, Akwa Ibom State. Through this project, NCF has established a Craft Center to produce ornaments and domestic items like buttons and necklaces from the Nipa palm. The project can be improved to help the indigenous people earn more income in a sustainable way, Obot said.

NCF Policy Advocacy Successes

¶9. (U) NCF is actively involved in policy advocacy. It lobbies the government to change or modify laws; lobbied for the establishment of the Federal Environmental Protection Agency which subsequently became the Ministry of Environment, Housing, and Urban Development; worked with other groups to influence the government to enact the Endangered Species Act; collaborated with the federal government to produce a National Conservation Strategy for Nigeria.

NCF Educates On Conservation

¶10. (U) NCF also educates the general public and target groups like law enforcement agents, woman and school children about its conservation programs. About 100 school children visit the Lekki Conservation Center (which houses the head-quarters of NCF) every day. On the national level, NCF runs conservation clubs that collaborate with the Ministry of Education. NCF organizes arts and essay competitions and national winners visit national parks and places of conservation interest. The 2006 winners took a field trip to Ghana.

¶11. (U) NCF uses the opportunity of several international environmental celebrations like Environment Day, Wetland Day, and Earth Day to educate and create more awareness on environmental issues and conservation actions in Nigeria. NCF has publications which have been used in universities. It also publishes a journal on conservation, Nature Watch and other materials.

Research Partnerships Requested

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¶12. (U) NCF receives PhD students from New Zealand and London for research but has no direct partnership with American universities. Currently a Nigerian PhD student studying at a New Zealand university is working with NCF to conduct research on bird species in the Mambilla Plateau. NCF asked for help in identifying U.S. universities with which to partner. (Comment: Post will follow up with NCF to help the group reach out to U.S. universities. End Comment).

¶13. (U) REO and Embassy Abuja have cleared this cable.